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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000002

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [KFRD](#) [MZ](#)

SUBJECT: [TRAFFICKING OF BANGLADESHI CITIZENS IN MOZAMBIQUE](#)

1. (SBU) Summary: In early December, 34 Bangladeshi nationals were apprehended by Mozambican police under charges of illegal immigration after having flown into the country from the Comoros Islands on a chartered airplane. Mozambican newspapers reported that the Bangladeshis were on their way to South Africa to seek employment, and were being trafficked by a man identified as "Satar." Press reports intimate that corrupt immigration and police officials in Nampula, Mozambique may have been involved in both the issuance of the entry visas and the subsequent detention of the Bangladeshi nationals. Post understands that immigration by South Asians into and through Mozambique continues to increase. End Summary.

2. (U) The group of Bangladeshis flew into Nampula city airport on an aircraft belonging to Servico Aereo Regional (Regional Air Service). When contacted later by a journalist, the director of this small airline, "Mr. Mario," said the airplane had been chartered by a Comoros Islands-based company called Royal Aviation.

3. (U) All 34 Bangladeshis obtained visas from immigration officials at the Nampula airport. It is not known if Satar had a hand in arranging for the visas in advance of the Bangladeshis' arrival, but there are allegations that immigration officials may have been bribed. According to news reports, Satar is said to have told police officials that this was not the first time he had trafficked Bangladeshi laborers to South Africa, and that he earns a commission for delivering such groups.

4. (U) Satar had arranged to transport the group of Bangladeshis south towards the South African border in rental cars. It is not clear how or under what circumstances the detentions occurred, but half the group was detained in Nampula city, and the other 17 were apprehended in Inhambane province, approximately 700 km away from the South African border, Ressano Garcia-Komatipoort. How the group was planning to cross into South Africa is unknown, but in other cases of trafficking reported by the International Organization for Migration, illegal immigrants have been reported to either be smuggled across the border in vehicles or boats, or have attempted to cross by foot.

5. (U) After one week of detention in a Nampula city prison facility, 17 Bangladeshis were repatriated via the Comoros Islands on the same charter aircraft that had earlier flown them to Mozambique. The other half was waiting for resources to be made available to fund a second flight. A newspaper report said that Mozambican officials were considering sending the 17 remaining Bangladeshi nationals to Malawi where the Bangladeshi Embassy could assume responsibility for repatriating them. Post has been unable to find out what became of the 17 Bangladeshis remaining in Nampula city.

6. (U) The key questions underlined by press reports are why and how the Bangladeshi nationals were detained by police when Mozambican Immigration had granted the group valid entry visas. Both the Mozambican National Police and Immigration are refusing to comment, both sides suggesting that the other is responsible for the situation and should therefore be releasing to the public an official account. One newspaper report suggests that the police detained the Bangladeshis despite their being in possession of valid visas after the group refused to pay a bribe.

7. (SBU) Recent telephone conversations with a contact in the Office of Immigration in Maputo and an informal contact in Nampula city confirm what Post wrote in a January 2004 cable (04 Maputo 112) regarding immigration trends of South Asians in Mozambique: the numbers of Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi nationals coming to Mozambique are rising. While there are many established South Asian communities in Mozambique - particularly in Nampula province - significant numbers of these nationals continue to seek ways to illegally enter South Africa. The South Asians who are not able to obtain a visa to enter Mozambique generally enter the country through land routes in Malawi and Tanzania, and also use boats (embarking from Tanzania) to go ashore in Cabo Delgado and Nampula provinces.

8. (SBU) Post's contact in the office of immigration in Maputo acknowledges the problem of corruption among visa officials in general, but particularly in more remote areas of Mozambique. For the right sum, it is not difficult for third country nationals to obtain either a Mozambican

passport or residency permit. This is apparent on the visa line, where Post has seen probable imposters applying for visas using genuine Mozambican identity documents.

19. (U) A recent article published on December 21, draws attention to the growing misuse of 30-day Mozambican tourist visas, which are routinely granted by Mozambican immigration officials both at the land borders and at airports, often with minimal scrutiny or interviewing. In the same article, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism Vitoria Dias Diogo acknowledged that the ease with which foreigners can obtain Mozambican visitor's visas may create opportunities for gain and profit for those harboring ill intentions regarding immigration law, and said the issue would be reexamined by the Tourist Commission.